

Ithaca, NY - Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) visited Cornell University today to speak out against a Republican proposal to cut the Federal Pell Grant Program by \$5.7 billion. Hinchey said the cut would make it harder for 2,200 Cornell Students to afford tuition. Originally proposed as part of a Republican spending bill (H.R. 1), the cut would reduce the maximum Pell Grant award by \$845 for millions of students and eliminate the college aid program altogether for an estimated 10,000 students nationwide.

"This is just another example of the recklessness of the Republican spending plan," said Hinchey. "They want to keep tax cuts for billionaires and huge subsidies for oil companies, but they want to cut college aid for students and families in need at a time when tuition costs are rising. The average student loan debt was \$23,000 and cutting Pell Grants would only increase that burden for 14,000 students and their families in the congressional district I represent and 9 million nationwide. It's a huge mistake. Education is the best investment we can make as a society and I'm going to fight against these cuts."

Since its creation in 1965, the Pell Grant program has provided millions of students with essential financial aid, and currently represents the largest source of federal assistance for students in college. Grants are provided based on need to help students from low-income families afford a college education. In many instances, students benefiting from the Pell Grant program are the first in their family to go to college.

Hinchey has long been an advocate for the Pell Grant program. In 2009, Hinchey helped to pass the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which provided \$15 billion in new funding for the program and raised the maximum award. Last year, Hinchey worked to pass the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act (SAFRA), the largest single investment in federal student aid in American history, fully paid for with the elimination of big bank middlemen who were skimming off the top of the loan program. The federal government now loans directly to students. The change saved taxpayers \$61 billion and will reduce the deficit by at least \$1 billion annually.

Without SAFRA, the maximum Pell Grant was set to be cut in half from \$5,540 in 2010 to \$2,840 in 2011. Instead, constituents in Hinchey's congressional district will now see the maximum grant gradually increase to \$5,975 by 2017. Starting in 2013, the scholarship will be set to automatically rise based on the costs-of-living as represented in the Consumer Price Index.